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RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 4411

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 000475

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: TWENTY YEARS  
TAGS: PGOV EC  
SUBJECT: ELECTION FATIGUE IN ECUADOR

REF: A. QUITO 308  
1B. QUITO 329

Classified By: Classified By: DCM Andrew Chritton for Reasons 1.4 (b&d)

11. (SBU) Summary: Nearly two months after the April 26 nationwide elections, official results for the National Assembly and local races still have not been announced, possibly complicating the government's plans for an August 10 presidential inauguration ceremony. On the heels of this process, Ecuador held yet another round of elections on June 14 for the Andean Parliament and rural parish councils. End Summary.

APRIL OUTCOMES UNRESOLVED

12. (C) The April 26 races that were most keenly contested were those of the National Assembly members and local officials since the presidential race was a foregone conclusion. Nearly two months after the April 26 general election, the National Electoral Council (CNE) has still not announced official results, except in the presidential/vice presidential race. The CNE cites isolated violence that caused the repetition of elections in a few places, disputed results, and the time required for the appeals process as reasons for the delay. OAS Election Observation Mission head Enrique Correa pointed out during a June 16 briefing for representatives of OAS member states that demands for recounts came not only from opposition parties, but also President Correa's Proud and Sovereign Fatherland (PAIS) movement. OAS representative Ambassador Antonio Aranibar explained the unwillingness to accept election results as part of the Ecuadorian political culture. So far it still looks like PAIS will win 59 of the 124 seats in the National Assembly, which falls short of the PAIS majority President Correa was hoping for.

13. (C) The CNE still has time to meet the planned swearing-in dates of August 10 for the president and July 31 for the members of the National Assembly, but it will need to hurry. The constitution mandates that 30 days after all of the final results are announced, the National Assembly members will be sworn in. Ten days after the swearing in of the Assembly members, the president will then assume office. Preliminary results were supposed to be announced this week, subject to appeals, but the CNE just announced another week of postponement. The GOE is fixated on the August 10 date because it would be the 200th anniversary of the first proclamation of independence from the Spanish, called the "grito de independencia," and 30 years after the inauguration of the first democratic government after military rule.

YET ONE MORE ROUND

14. (SBU) As the country awaits the results of April's election, yet another round of elections was held Sunday,

June 14, the second set of nationwide elections this year. This set of elections was to elect Ecuador's five representatives to the Andean Parliament and the 3,985 members of rural parish councils. While voter turnout was about average (and better than initial reports suggested), pre-poll surveys showed that nearly all voters did not understand what they were voting for nor did they care. In a country with compulsory voting, Ecuadorians merely showed up to collect their voting certificate proving that they voted. Without this certificate, which can also be obtained after paying a fine of \$12, many everyday transactions (like getting a driver's license, opening a bank account, or registering your car) are impossible.

¶15. (SBU) As of June 17, nearly 91% of the ballots in the Andean Parliament race had been counted, showing President Correa's PAIS movement with a commanding lead, winning the support of over 45% of voters. It looks as though PAIS will claim three of the five seats, with the opposition Patriotic Society and Social Christian parties each taking one. Results for the rural parish council races will not be announced for a few weeks.

¶16. (SBU) According to National Electoral Council President Omar Simon, the June 14 elections saw only minor problems in a few areas. In two parishes in El Oro Province the election materials for the two parishes were confused and each received the other's. In one parish in Esmeraldas Province armed drunk men threatened local people. Only 3,121 voters were affected by these problems and these parishes will again hold the elections this Friday, June 19. While there were a few problems, the OAS's Correa judged that overall the process in Sunday's election went much more smoothly than the April 26 elections, in part because there were more people staffing the intermediate counting centers.

¶17. (C) The OAS's Correa pointed out that deciding results for the rural parish council races may be difficult given the small number of voters and the large number of likely ties. Final decisions in case of ties will be made by drawing lots to decide the winner of each race.

#### COMMENT

¶18. (C) The extended delay in announcing results of the April 26 elections has tainted the process. After going to the polls seven times in less than three years, many voters, and even more so the poll workers, understandably consider the obligatory voting requirement a burden.

HODGES